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PAGE 01 STATE 005879
ORIGIN IO-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /015 R

66011

DRAFTED BY:IO:UNA:BJSHARP

APPROVED BY:IO:UNA:AFHOLLOWAY

-----105064 101126Z /15

P 100223Z JAN 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

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FROM UNA

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM DURBAN DATED JANUARY 9, 1978 SENT
SECSTATE WASHDC INFO PRETORIA, CAPE TOWN, JOHANNESBURG,
GABORONE, LONDON IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SF, ELAB

SUBJ: TWO POLITICAL ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS IN DURBAN

REF: A. 77 DURBAN 614 B. 77 DURBAN 802

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: IN SEPARATE INCIDENTS IN DURBAN ON NIGHT OF
JANUARY 7-8, TWO APPARENTLY POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ASSASSINATION
ATTEMPTS OCCURRED. PROFESSOR RICHARD TURNER, A BANNED RADICAL
PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL ACTIVE IN BLACK TRADE
UNIONISM, WAS KILLED AT HIS HOME AND STEPHEN MTSHALI, A FORMER
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ANC MEMBER WHO HAD GIVEN STATE EVIDENCE AGAINST SUSPECTED ANC
MEMBERS AT RECENT TRIALS WAS CRITICALLY WOUNDED AT HIS HOME
IN A DURBAN TOWNSHIP. NO GROUPS SO FAR HAVE CLAIMED CREDIT
FOR EITHER ATTEMPT AND NO ARRESTS HAVE BEEN MADE BY POLICE.
THESE ATTACKS FOLLOW TWO SIMILAR ATTACKS IN LATTER PART OF
1977 AGAINST A BLACK SECURITY POLICEMAN AND HOME OF A BANNED
INDIAN ACTIVIST. END SUMMARY.

2. WITHIN A SPACE OF ONE HOUR ON THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 7-8, TWO APPARENTLY POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS OCCURRED IN DURBAN. IN FIRST ATTEMPT, STEPHEN MTSHALI, A FORMER ANC MEMBER WHO GAVE STATES EVIDENCE AT A RECENT ANC TRIAL IN NATAL, WAS GUNNED DOWN IN FRONT OF HIS HOME IN THE DURBAN TOWNSHIP OF KWAMASHU BY A MASKED PERSON, THOUGHT TO BE BLACK. HE IS IN CRITICAL CONDITION IN A DURBAN HOSPITAL. APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR LATER IN A WHITE SUBURB 10 MILES FROM KWAMASHU, PROFESSOR RICHARD TURNER, A BANNED RADICAL POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR AT UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, WAS KILLED BY TWO BULLETS AS HE PEERED THROUGH THE FRONT WINDOW OF HIS HOUSE TO SEE WHO HAD KNOCKED AT HIS DOOR. IN NEITHER ATTEMPT WAS THERE ANY INDICATION THAT ASSAILANT'S MOTIVES WERE OTHER THAN MURDER. POLICE HAVE NOT MADE ANY STATEMENTS LINKING THE TWO EVENTS THOUGH THEY ARE INVESTIGATING THE POSSIBILITY. IT WAS REPORTED THAT BULLET CASINGS OF UNSPECIFIED ORIGIN WERE FOUND AT TURNER'S HOME AND THAT MTSHALI WAS SHOT WITH A "FIREARM OF COMMUNIST ORIGIN".

3. THESE EVENTS FOLLOW TWO OTHER ATTACKS IN 1977 IN DURBAN DIRECTED AGAINST PERSONS INVOLVED IN BLACK POLITICAL ACTIVITY. IN SEPTEMBER A BLACK SECURITY BRANCH SERGEANT, LEONARD NKOSI, WAS SHOT AND KILLED IN HIS BED IN UMLAZI TOWNSHIP (REF A). HE, LIKE MTSHALI, HAD BEEN A MEMBER OF THE ANC MILITANT WING WHO HAD GIVEN EVIDENCE AGAINST HIS FORMER COLLEAGUES IN SOUTH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AFRICAN COURTS AND LATER JOINED THE SECURITY POLICE. IN DECEMBER HOME OF FATIMA MEER, LIKE TURNER A BANNED PERSON WITH PRONOUNCED RADICAL SYMPATHIES, WAS THE TARGET OF AN ATTACK QUITE SIMILAR IN DETAIL TO THE ONE ON TURNER. IN MEER'S CASE (REF B) A BLACK VISITING MEER HOME OPENED DOOR TO INVESTIGATE BURNING OF TWO CARS IN DRIVEWAY AND WAS IMMEDIATELY HIT IN THE SHOULDER BY SHOTS FROM UNIDENTIFIED ASSAILANTS WHO FLED IN A VEHICLE. NO OTHER MEMBER OF MEER FAMILY WAS INJURED. POLICE HAVE NOT MADE ANY ARRESTS IN EITHER CASE.

4. TURNER PLAYED LEADING ROLE IN EARLY 70'S IN FORMATION OF A NUMBER OF AFRICAN UNIONS IN DURBAN WHICH LATER COALESCED INTO TRADE UNION AND ADVISORY COORDINATING COUNCIL (TUACC), A FEDERATION OF FIVE UNREGISTERED BLACK UNIONS ACTIVE IN DURBAN AND ON REEF (77 DURBAN A-29). HE WAS ALSO ONE OF FOUNDERS OF INSTITUTE FOR INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION (IIE), TUACC'S EDUCATIONAL WING WHICH RUNS CORRESPONDENCE COURSES FOR AFRICAN WORKERS. ALTHOUGH BANNED IN 1973 SOON AFTER SERIES OF WILDCAT STRIKES BY UNORGANIZED AFRICAN WORKERS, TURNER'S INFLUENCE IN TUACC AND IIE CONTINUED THROUGH A NUMBER OF HIS EX-STUDENTS FROM NATAL WHO WERE EMPLOYED BY TUACC AND IIE AS ADVISORS. MOST OF THEM WERE ALSO SUBSEQUENTLY BANNED.

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5. MTSHALI WAS A MAJOR STATE WITNESS IN PIETERMARITZBURG ANC TRIAL WHICH RESULTED IN CONVICTION LAST JULY OF TEN AFRICANS OF ANC AND TERRORIST ACTIVITIES (77 DURBAN 513 AND PREVIOUS). ACCORDING TO TESTIMONY IN TRIAL, MTSHALI JOINED ANC IN 1962 AND WAS ACTIVE MEMBER IN MILITARY WING, MKHONTO WESIZWE. DURING TRIAL HE ADMITTED UNDERGOING MILITARY TRAINING WITH DEFENDANTS AND IMPLICATED THEM IN OTHER TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. MTSHALI WAS ACIVE IN ANC DURING SAME PERIOD AS SGT. NKOSI.

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6. ACCORDING TO LOCAL SOURCES WHO KNEW TURNER WELL, THERE IS SOME INDICATION HE MAY HAVE BEEN PLANNING TO LEAVE SOUTH AFRICA, EITHER VIA OFFICIAL EXIT PERMIT OR A LA DONALD WOODS. TURNER'S SECOND WIFE, LOCALLY KNOWN AS FOSZIA FISCHER, HAD LEFT FOR BOTSWANA SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER, ALLEGEDLY WITH INTENTION OF REMAINING THERE. AT TIME OF MURDER, TURNER HAD TWO DAUGHTERS BY AN EARLIER MARRIAGE WITH HIM AND HAD ASKED THEIR MOTHER IN CAPE TOWN TO SEND GIRLS' PASSPORTS SO THEY COULD GO TO BOTSWANA TO JOIN FISCHER. (AS BACKGROUND, FISCHER IS ALSO A RADICAL ACTIVIST, FORMERLY ON STAFF OF IIE AND AN EDITOR AND FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO RESPECTED SOUTH AFRICAN LABOR BULLETIN. FISCHER IS OF INDIAN-COLORED DESCENT. HER MARRIAGE TO TURNER, WHICH VIOLATES S.A. MIXED MARRIAGES ACT, WAS TOLERATED BY ALTHOUGH KNOWN TO S.A. POLICE.)

7. COMMENT: THOUGH LINKAGE OF ATTACKS IS BEING EXPLORED, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SEPARATE GROUPS OR PERSONS WERE INVOLVED. MURDER OF DETECTIVE NKOSI AND WOUNDING OF MTSHALI WOULD MOST LIKELY APPEAR TO BE WORK OF MILITANT ANC WING SEEKING REVENGE AGAINST PERSONS THEY CONSIDER TRAITORS TO MOVEMENT. MURDER OF TURNER AND ATTACK ON MEER FAMILY ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO ATTRIBUTE. SIMILAR METHODS USED COULD INDICATE THAT BOTH ATTACKS WERE WORK OF SAME PERSON OR PERSONS. THERE HAS BEEN NO INDICATION OF POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN EITHER OF LATTER TWO INCIDENTS ALTHOUGH SOME PRIVATE SPECULATION ALONG THIS LINE HAS ARISEN. TURNER, ESPECIALLY, WAS NOT GENERALLY WELL KNOWN TO PUBLIC AND HIS ATTACKERS WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE WELL INFORMED ON DURBAN RADICAL POLITICS TO SELECT HIM AS AN ASSASSINATION TARGET. IT IS ALSO AT LEAST A POSSIBILITY THAT TURNER'S REPORTED IMMINENT DEPARTURE FROM SOUTH AFRICA MAY BE RELATED TO ATTACK REMULTING IN HIS DEATH.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ASSASSINATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE005879
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: IO:UNA:BJSHARP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780014-0676
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780180/aaaacpot.tel
Line Count: 176
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4ca8eae4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN IO
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 DURBAN 614
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3800441
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TWO POLITICAL ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS IN DURBAN
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ELAB, SF
To: USUN NEW YORK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4ca8eae4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014